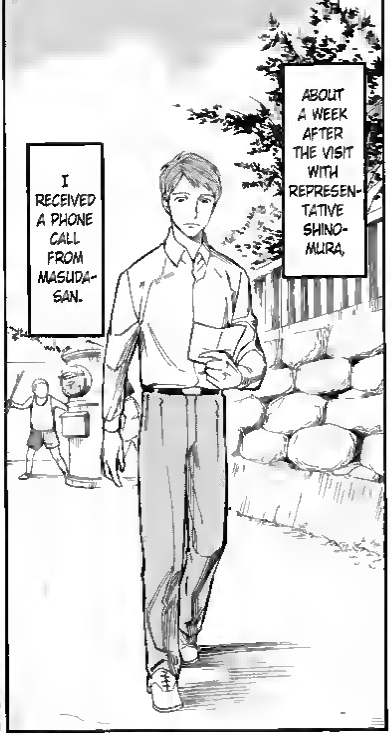
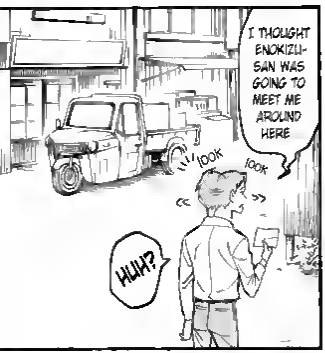
Chapter 03

HE WANTS TO DO HIS MAGIC POT RITUAL TOMORROW NIGHT
ALL OF THE SUSPECTS WILL BE THERE!


ABOUT A WEEK AFTER THE VISIT WITH REPRESENTATIVE SHINOMURA,
I RECEIVED A PHONE CALL FROM MASUDA-SAN.

YEAH, HE'S GOING TO DO IT IN THE BARN BEHIND THE MANSION
SO ARE YOU GONNA COME, EDAJIMA-SAN?


I THOUGHT ENOKIZU-SAN WAS GOING TO MEET ME AROUND HERE
LOOK
LOOK
HUH?

GREAT! COME PREPARED TO DO SOME PHYSICAL LABOR!
silence
click
.....
PHYSICAL LABOR?

THAT'S WHERE SANAE WAS ASSAULTED...
OF COURSE I'M COMING!
MY NAME ISN'T EDAJIMA, THOUGH

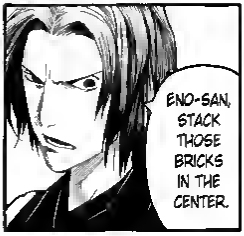
!
Chapter 03

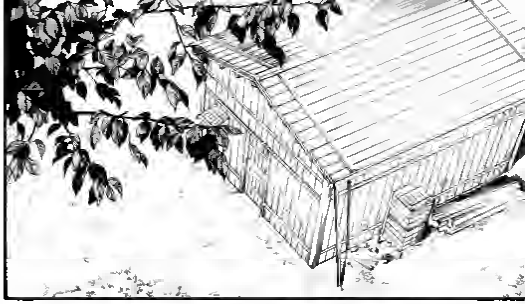
GRAB
OH SORRY
WAIT, ENOKIZU-SAN, IS THAT YOU?
HUH?
YOU'RE LATE!
YOU'RE SUPER LATE!!
GLARE
VROOM

SWERVE
SWERVE
WHOOSH
A
H
H
H
!!!

SLAM
SCREECH
VROOOM...

SNORT
IT'S CHUUZENJI-SAN...
THE RITUAL ISN'T UNTIL MIDNIGHT, BUT WE NEED TO PREPARE A CEREMONIAL SITE IN THE BARN
SNICKER
SNICKER
THE SUSPECTS ARE WAITING IN THE MAIN HOUSE.
SO THIS IS THE PLACE...
WHERE MY NIECE WAS RAPED...


ENO-SAN, STACK THOSE BRICKS IN THE CENTER.



YES SIR!
WE DON'T NEED THAT CRAP. TAKE IT OUTSIDE

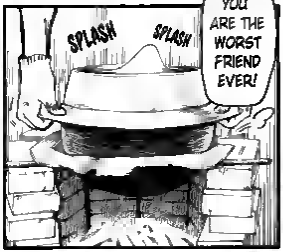
I'M SUPER-VISING
BY THE WAY, WHY ARE YOU WEARING THAT RIDICULOUS OUTFIT?
What look were you going for?

SHUT UP, YOU BOOK HOARDER!
I, UH, HAVE A TOOTH-ACHE!

DAMN IT, WHY ARE WE DOING ALL THE WORK WHILE YOU JUST WATCH!?
STACK
STACK

THERE
IT'S READY.

HA
HA
HA
HA
PFFT!
YOU POOR BABY!


SPLASH
SPLASH
YOU ARE THE WORST FRIEND EVER!

CRACKLE
CRACKLE

Jew

STRIKE

WOW, THAT'S HOT!
DO YOU REALLY NEED SUCH A BIG FIRE TO BOIL WATER? SEEMS LIKE OVERKILL.
RITUALS ARE ALL ABOUT IMPRESSING THE UNEDUCATED MASSES WITH SPECTACLE.
I THINK YOU LIKE OVER-DOING THINGS.
SHUT UP.
SO IS IT HOT ENOUGH YET?
HEY, WHAT DO YOU THINK? WHAT WAS YOUR NAME AGAIN? TONDA-HAYASHI-KUN? SHIMANTO-GAWA-KUN?
UM. . NOT QUITE

HEY, AKAGI-YAMA-KUN, I'M ASKING YOU IF YOU THINK IT'S HOT ENOUGH!!
GLARE
SHOCK
YEAH, IT'S PRETTY HOT... UM, MAYBE YOU SHOULD TAKE OFF THAT MASK? IF YOU HAVE A TOOTHACHE, WON'T THE HEAT MAKE IT WORSE?
UM...
I DON'T HAVE A. I MEAN, IT'S NOT THAT BAD!
I JUST WANT TO KEEP IT COVERED!

HA HA HA HA
I, ENOKIZU REIJIROU, AM HERE TO KICK ASS AND TAKE NAMES, OR AT LEAST TO KICK ASS!
DRAMATIC POSE!

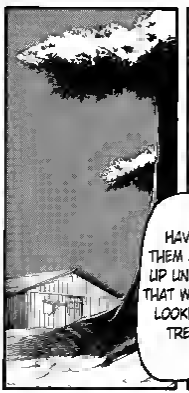
YOUR SENSE OF FASHION HAS ALWAYS BEEN AWFUL, BUT THERE'S GENERALLY SOME LOGIC TO IT
HM...
I SEE.

ARE YOU TRYING TO PROTECT.
YOUR SECRET IDENTITY?
SNICKER

DON'T MAKE IT SOUND SO UNCOOL!

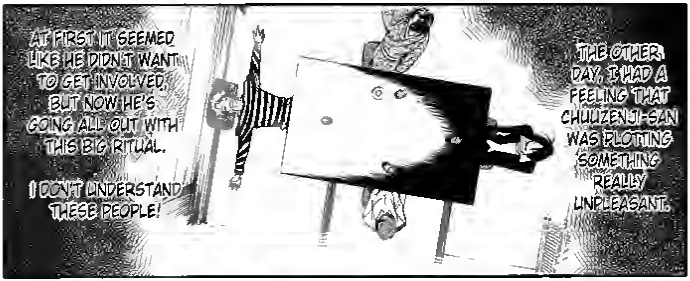
HUH?
WHAT IS HE PLANNING NOW?

KOORIYAMA-KUN, YOUR JOB IS TO STAND HERE AND RELAY MY INSTRUCTIONS TO KYOUGOKU!


HAVE THEM LINE UP UNDER THAT WEIRD-LOOKING TREE

ALRIGHT, OUR "GUESTS" WILL BE HERE SOON
I'LL WATCH THROUGH THIS WINDOW

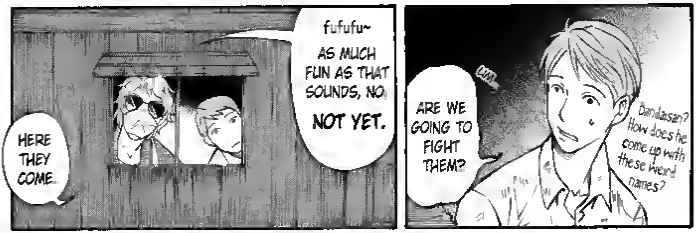
I MEAN, IT WOULD BE ONE THING IF THEY WERE JUST LEAVING OUT SOME MINOR DETAILS...
BUT THEY'RE LEAVING ME TOTALLY IN THE DARK HERE!
THOSE TWO HAVE BEEN CAGEY ABOUT THEIR PLANS SINCE THE VERY BEGINNING!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON
THEY'RE NOT TELLING ME ANYTHING...


AT FIRST IT SEEMED LIKE HE DIDN'T WANT TO GET INVOLVED, BUT NOW HE'S GOING ALL OUT WITH THIS BIG RITUAL.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND THESE PEOPLE!
THE OTHER DAY, I HAD A FEELING THAT CHUUZENJI-SAN WAS PLOTTING SOMETHING REALLY UNPLEASANT.

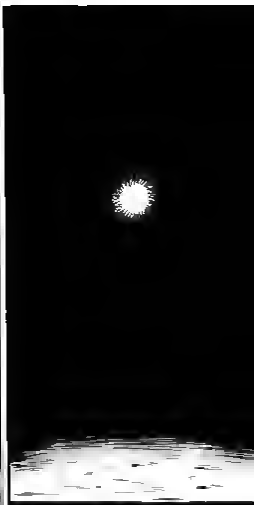
...IT'S TIME.
AND IS CHUUZENJI-SAN REALLY A SORCEROR!?
AND CAN IT REALLY BE TRUE THAT ENOKIZU-SAN HAS THE POWER TO LOOK INTO OTHER PEOPLE'S MEMORIES?
THAT CAN'T BE POSSIBLE!

DON'T MAKE ANY NOISE.
IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN THE PROPER SPIRITUAL ATMO-SPHERE
WHISTLE
la la la la la
HUM
...I GUESS HE'S JUST ONE OF THOSE RICH ECCENTRIC TYPES...
UM ENOKIZU-SENSEI, WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THIS RITUAL IS OVER..?
LOOK!
HUH?
BELIEVE IT OR NOT, HE ACTUALLY GRADUATED FROM THE IMPERIAL UNI-VERSITY'S LAW SCHOOL!

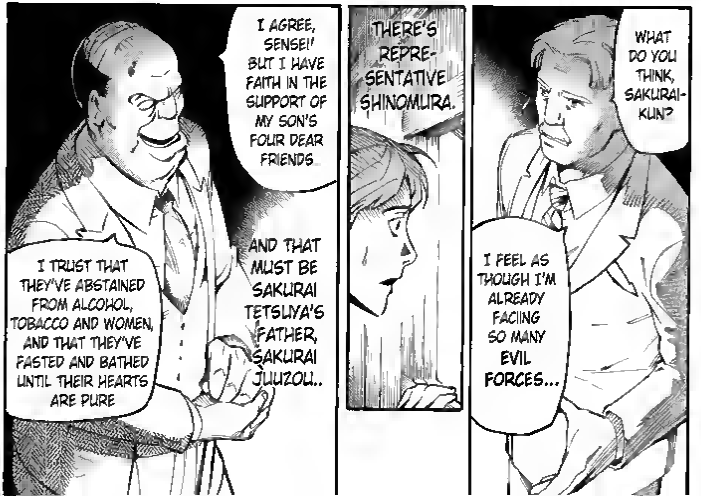
WE'RE ABOUT TO COME FACE TO FACE WITH THE JERKS WHO HURT YOUR NIECE, BANDAISAN-KUN!
?
I can't see anything...


HERE THEY COME.
fufufu~
AS MUCH FUN AS THAT SOUNDS, NO,
NOT YET.
ARE WE GOING TO FIGHT THEM?
Bandaisan? How does he come up with these weird names?

FRIENDS AND RELATIONS OF THE BRIDE AND GROOM, WE HAVE COME HERE TONIGHT TO SEEK THE APPROVAL OF THE GODS WITH THE RITUAL OF THE SINGING IRON POT.
WE MUST ASK THE [redacted] FOR THEIR BLESSING



IF THE MARRIAGE IS ILL-FATED, THEN THE SUPPORT OF ALL WHO HAVE GATHERED HERE WILL BE NEEDED TO WIN THE FAVOR OF THE GODS.
HAVE YOU ALL COMPLETED THE RITES OF PURIFICATION?


I AGREE, SENSEI! BUT I HAVE FAITH IN THE SUPPORT OF MY SON'S FOUR DEAR FRIENDS
AND THAT MUST BE SAKURAI TETSUYA'S FATHER, SAKURAI JUUZOU..
I TRUST THAT THEY'VE ABSTAINED FROM ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND WOMEN, AND THAT THEY'VE FASTED AND BATHED UNTIL THEIR HEARTS ARE PURE
THERE'S REPRESENTATIVE SHINOMURA.
WHAT DO YOU THINK, SAKURAI-KUN?
I FEEL AS THOUGH I'M ALREADY FACING SO MANY EVIL FORCES...

IN THAT CASE, LET US BEGIN.
THERE CAN BE NO MISTAKES IN THIS RITUAL.
PLEASE APPROACH THE SACRED TREE ONE AT A TIME.
THEN YOU BOYS MAY ENTER THE RITUAL CHAMBER TO FACE THE GODS
!?
shuffle
shuffle
shuffle
IS THAT... EBATA!?
SHUNK

TCH...
HE'S SCUM.

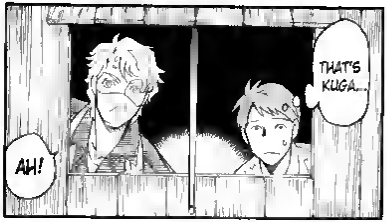
AND THAT'S IMAI...
UGH

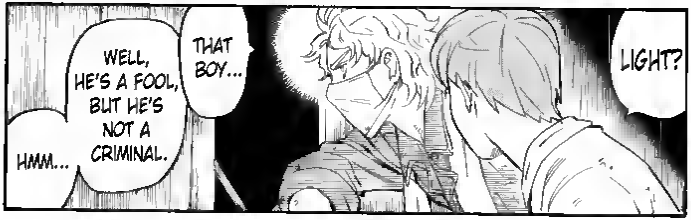
MORE GARBAGE. I'M GOING TO BE SICK

NEXT, PLEASE

TCH...
THEY'RE ALL GUILTY. ALL OF THEM!
THAT'S TONOMURA...
WHAT IS HE SEEING!?
AND THE LAST ONE...
AH

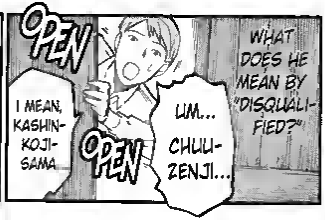
WHAT'S THIS LIGHT ...?


AH!
THAT'S KUGA...


HMM...
WELL, HE'S A FOOL, BUT HE'S NOT A CRIMINAL.
THAT BOY...
LIGHT?

GO ON, JUST TELL HIM!
DIS-QUALI-FIED?
HE'S DISQUALI-FIED!
TELL KYOUGOKU THAT THE LAST BOY HAS NO PLACE BEING HERE!
ALRIGHT, KINNOU-MARU-KUN! RELAY THIS MESSAGE!

HE SHOULD BE DIS-QUALI-FIED...
UM... THAT ONE'S NO GOOD...


OPEN
OPEN
I MEAN, KASHIN-KOJI-SAMA...
UM... CHUU-ZENJI...
WHAT DOES HE MEAN BY "DISQUALI-FIED?"

WHAT IS IT, KASEN-JIKI-KUN!?

WHAT!?
EH!?
SHINOMURA-SENSEI, THAT SHAMELESS BOY HAS DEFILED HIMSELF AND OUR RITUAL!
HE MUST BE CAST OUT!
AHA! NO WONDER THE GODS HAVE BEEN DISPLEASED!
BUT... BUT I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING, I SWEAR!
WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, BOY!?
WHAT'S THIS NOW!? ARE YOU TRYING TO RUIN MY REPUTATION!?
WHAT DOES ENOKIZU-SAN SEE WHEN HE LOOKS AT HIM?
SAKURAI TETSUYA...
SHOVE
KUGA!
I ASKED YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RITUAL BECAUSE I THOUGHT I COULD TRUST YOU! I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS!!
WHY, KUGA?
ARE YOU TRYING TO BRING SHAME ON MY FUTURE WIFE!?

GRAB
N... NO!! I SWEAR, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
OI, KUGA, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!
AND NOW YOU'RE BETRAYING US, YOU BASTARD!?
WE THOUGHT WE COULD TRUST YOU!
TCH... AFTER WHAT HE DID TO... I DON'T HAVE MUCH SYMPATHY!
AFTER EVERYTHING TETSUYA-SAN HAS DONE FOR YOU!?
WHAT KIND OF MAN ARE YOU!?
WAIT, KASENKOJI-KUN, WHAT'S GOING ON!?
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

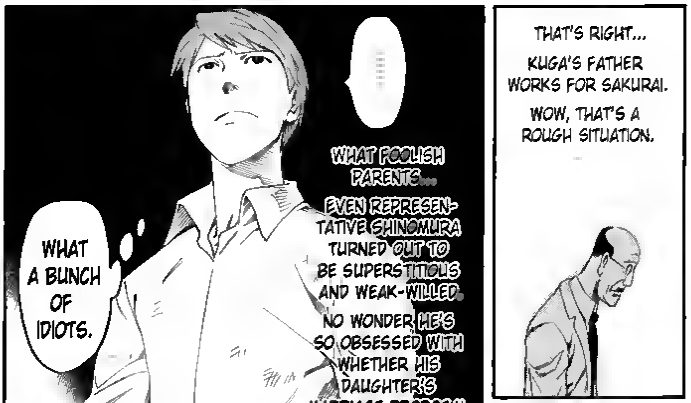
THAT'S SHINOMURA MIYAKO...
I SAW HER LIPS MOVE... DID SHE SAY "YOU IDIOTS?"
FATHER, SAKURAI-SAMA...
PLEASE WILL EVERYONE JUST CALM DOWN?

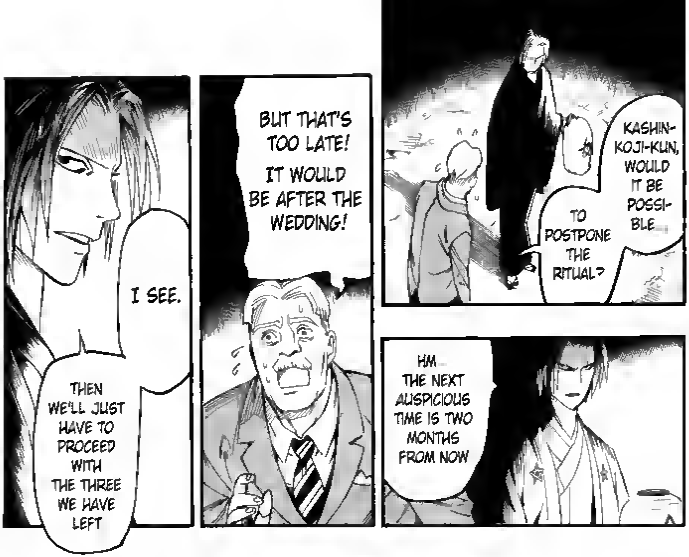
IT'S VERY LATE, AND I HAVE PLANS TO GO HORSEBACK RIDING TOMORROW.
I'VE ALREADY DECIDED THAT I WILL MARRY TETSUYA-SAN, AND I'LL LET NOTHING PREVENT ME FROM MARRYING HIM.
SO PLEASE, LET'S STOP THIS.
OH, MIYAKO, PLEASE DON'T WORRY.
YOU'RE MY PRECIOUS DAUGHTER.
I WON'T LET ANYTHING RUIN YOUR WEDDING DAY.
OH NO, WE'RE OVERJOYED TO WELCOME SUCH A FINE AND TALENTED WOMAN INTO OUR HUMBLE HOUSEHOLD!
YOU NEED NOT WORRY AT ALL, SHINOMURA-SENSEI.
MY SON WILL TREAT MIYAKO-SAMA LIKE A PRINCESS!
BUT MIYAKO, TETSUYA-KUN AND HIS FATHER HAVE ALREADY GONE THROUGH SO MUCH TROUBLE TO BE HERE...
THEN PLEASE, LET'S STOP THIS CHILDISH FARCE.

OUR FAMILY WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR DEAR MIYAKO-SAMA, OF COURSE, BUT IF THIS IS TOO MUCH FOR HER.
OI, TETSUYA! THAT BOY... IS THAT KUGA? DAMN IT...
TSK-N
WHAT-EVER SHALL WE DO?
OH .. OH DEAR. I JUST DON'T KNOW...
WELL WE COULD CALL OFF THE RITUAL.
GET OUT OF HERE!!
KICK
OH... IS THAT ALRIGHT?
REGARD-LESS OF WHAT YOU DECIDE I SWEAR TO SPEAK NOTHING OF WHAT HAPPENED HERE TONIGHT.

YOUR FATHER IS GOING TO PAY FOR THIS!
NOOOO!
ROLL
ROLL

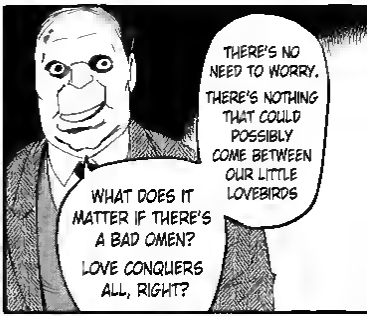
WE NEED TO MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T TELL ANYONE ELSE ABOUT THIS
OH MY...

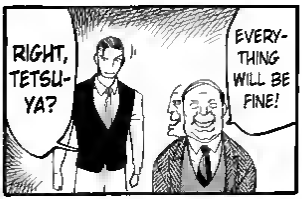

WHAT A BUNCH OF IDIOTS.
WHAT FOOLISH PARENTS...
EVEN REPRESENTATIVE SHINOMURA TURNED OUT TO BE SUPERSTITIOUS AND WEAK-WILLED.
NO WONDER HE'S SO OBSESSED WITH WHETHER HIS DAUGHTER'S MARRIAGE PROPOSAL IS LUCKY OR NOT.
THAT'S RIGHT...
KUGA'S FATHER WORKS FOR SAKURAI.
WOW, THAT'S A ROUGH SITUATION.

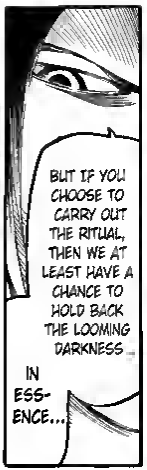

KASHIN-KOJI-KUN, WOULD IT BE POSSI-BLE...
TO POSTPONE THE RITUAL?
HM... THE NEXT AUSPICIOUS TIME IS TWO MONTHS FROM NOW
BUT THAT'S TOO LATE! IT WOULD BE AFTER THE WEDDING!
I SEE.
THEN WE'LL JUST HAVE TO PROCEED WITH THE THREE WE HAVE LEFT

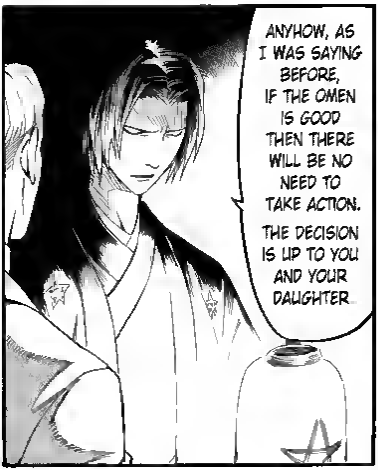
WHAT WILL THOSE BOYS HAVE TO DO?
CAN WE JUST GET STARTED?
IT'S FINE.
WILL THE RITUAL WORK WITH ONLY THREE?
IF THE OMEN IS GOOD, THEN THERE'S NO NEED FOR THEM TO DO ANYTHING
BUT IF THE OMEN IS BAD...
THEN I'LL NEED THEIR ASSISTANCE TO PERFORM AN EXORCISM.
RIGHT, SAKURAI-KUN? EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE
NO! I MEAN, I'M NOT THAT WORRIED
PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BEST TO POSTPONE THE WEDDING?
FATHER, IF YOU'RE THIS WORRIED...
AH, AN EXORCISM... SO THAT WILL FIX THINGS..

I'M NOT BACKING DOWN NO MATTER WHAT!
THERE'S NO NEED TO FEAR, MIYAKO-SAN!
YOU'LL BE MY WIFE!


THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY.
THERE'S NOTHING THAT COULD POSSIBLY COME BETWEEN OUR LITTLE LOVEBIRDS
WHAT DOES IT MATTER IF THERE'S A BAD OMEN?
LOVE CONQUERS ALL, RIGHT?


RIGHT, TETSU-YA?
EVERY-THING WILL BE FINE!


BUT IF YOU CHOOSE TO CARRY OUT THE RITUAL, THEN WE AT LEAST HAVE A CHANCE TO HOLD BACK THE LOOMING DARKNESS.
IN ESS-ENCE...


ANYHOW, AS I WAS SAYING BEFORE, IF THE OMEN IS GOOD THEN THERE WILL BE NO NEED TO TAKE ACTION.
THE DECISION IS UP TO YOU AND YOUR DAUGHTER

WH-WHAT SHOULD WE DO, KASHINKOJI-KUN?
SIGH

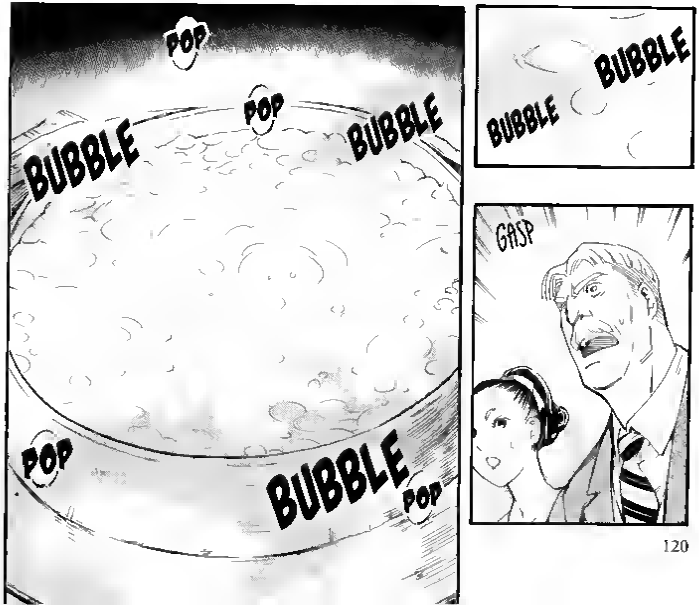
WH-WHAT!? TRANS-FERRED?
WHISPER
YOUR FAMILY'S BAD LUCK WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO THOSE THREE BOYS.
I THINK I SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING...
GLARE
OH WELL THAT SOUNDS FINE.
YES, THAT'S FINE!!
IS THIS ALRIGHT WITH YOU THREE?
JUST LEAVE IT TO US!
YEAH!!
REAL MEN HAVE NO FEAR!
THIS IS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!
BUT SINCE THE BAD LUCK WILL BE DIVIDED THREE WAYS, IT SHOULD HAVE NO EFFECT.
AS LONG AS THEY'VE PURIFIED THEMSELVES AND ABSTAINED FROM WICKEDNESS IN THEIR DAILY LIVES, A LITTLE BIT OF BAD LUCK WON'T HURT THEM AT ALL
AND SINCE YOU'VE SWORN THEM TO BE RIGHTEOUS AND UPSTANDING YOUNG MEN, THERE SHOULD BE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

LET'S DO IT.
OF COURSE, IF YOU'RE UNSURE, WE CAN STILL POST-PONE THE RITUAL...
HAVE YOU MADE YOUR DECI-SION?
THEN TONIGHT, WE SHALL FACE THE GODS.
!?
NO ONE BUT YOU WILL SEE THIS RITUAL.
PLEASE, COME THIS WAY.
GRIN

UGH...
steam
WHAT'S THIS...?

CLAP
CLAP
BRING THE OFFERINGS.
Y-YES SIR!
THE RITUAL OF THE SINGING IRON POT MAY SEEM UNFAMILIAR AND EVEN STRANGE TO YOU.
HOWEVER, IT IS A VERY OLD PRACTICE BASED ON THE ANCIENT WRITINGS OF ONMYOUDOU AND TAOISM.
YOU COULD EVEN SAY THAT RITUALS SUCH AS THIS ARE THE PUREST FORM OF RELIGION.
VERY WELL THEN.
TONIGHT I WILL PETITION THE GODS TO REVEAL THE FATE OF THE MARRIAGE BETWEEN SAKURAI TETSUYA AND SHINOMURA MIYAKO.

BUBBLE
BUBBLE
steam


POP
POP
BUBBLE
BUBBLE
POP
BUBBLE
POP
BUBBLE
BUBBLE
GASP

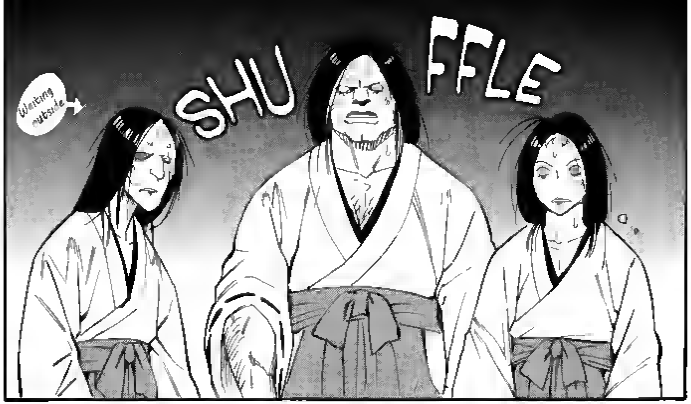
SPLASH
HISSS
HA!

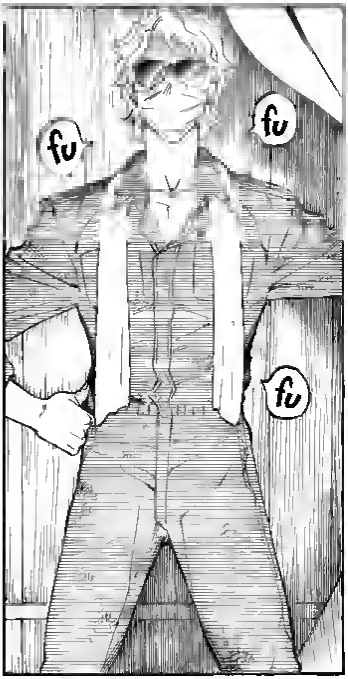
STEW
GROAN
GROAN
dizzy

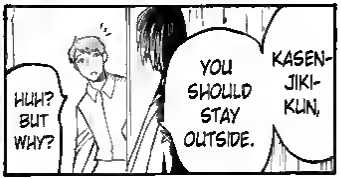
GROAN
GROAN
GROAN

A TERRIBLE OMEN!

THERE IS A CURSE UPON THIS MARRIAGE!
WE MUST EXORCISE THE EVIL SPIRITS!
UWAA!
ALL OF YOU MUST LEAVE IMMEDIATELY!
HEAD STRAIGHT BACK TO YOUR HOMES!
DO NOT DAWDLE OR DELAY!
YOUR SOULS ARE AT STAKE!!
SPEAK NOTHING OF THIS!
NOW GO!!
AND NOW, IT IS TIME FOR YOU THREE TO PLAY YOUR PART.
COME.


Waiting outside.
SHU
FFLE

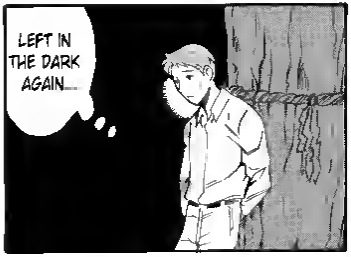

fu
fu
fu


KASEN-JIKI-KUN,
YOU SHOULD STAY OUTSIDE.
HUH? BUT WHY?

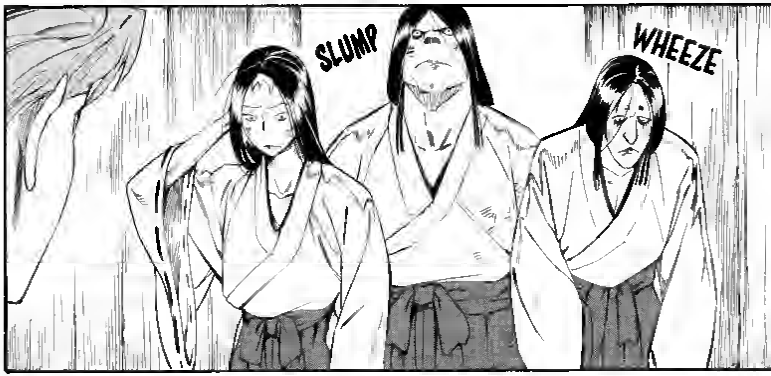
WHOOSH

SHOVE
OH, UM, HE'S JUST A WORK-MAN.
UH... WHO'S THAT WEIRD GUY?
PULL
TURN
WELL, THEN ....
I, THE HEIR TO THE WISE SAGE KASHIN-KOJI,
WILL TAKE GREAT PLEASURE IN TRANS-FERRING THIS TERRIBLE CURSE.

SLAM
.....


LEFT IN THE DARK AGAIN...

CREAK


SLUMP
WHEEZE

WHAT THE HECK HAPPENED THERE...?

?
?

I'M GOING BACK TO THE MANSION.
DON'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THIS TO ANYONE ELSE.
I'LL LEAVE THE CLEANUP TO YOU TWO
Sigh
THAT DAMNED DETECTIVE ALWAYS DEMANDS TOO MUCH FROM ME
CRASH
CRASH
CRASH
THE BRICKS ARE STILL HOT, SO BE CAREFUL, KOKUBUNJI-KUN!

WELL, I'M LEAVING.
HUH!?
See you later!
THEY'RE GOING TO HAVE THE WEDDING TEN DAYS FROM NOW.
THAT WENT WELL.
BY THE WAY, OKEHAGI-MA-KUN,
I TOLD YOU TO TAKE THAT OFF...
Ahh, I'm soooo hot!
SLAM
COME ON, HURRY UP!

THAT BOY WE KICKED OUT...
WAS THE BABY'S REAL FATHER!
WHAT ...!?
BUT...
VROOOM
ya ha ha ha ha

SEE YOU LATER!
THE BIGGEST MYSTERY HERE ISN'T THE CASE OR THE CRIME...
IT'S THE DETECTIVE!